

Message Text

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44

ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 IO-10 ISO-00 AID-05 FDRE-00 SR-02 ORM-01 VO-03

SCA-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00

NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 DPW-01 OPR-02

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R 251134Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3365

INFO AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY RANGOON

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

AMCONSUL UDORN

USMISSION GENEVA

CONFIDENTIAL BANGKOK 7411

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SREF, TH, CB, VS

SUBJECT: REFUGEES IN EASTERN AND NORTHEASTERN THAILAND

REF: A) BANGKOK 6785, B) GENEVA 2723, C) BANGKOK 6879

BEGIN SUMMARY: THERE ARE NOW ABOUT 4000 CAMBODIAN REFUGEES IN THE THREE PROVINCES ALONG THAILAND'S EASTERN BORDER WITH CAMBODIA, AND AN ESTIMATED 6000 IN ALL OF THAILAND. RECENT ARRIVALS AT ARANYA PRATHET DESCRIBED KHMER COMMUNIST ATROCITIES. THE RTG IS CARING FOR THOSE ALONG THE BORDER IN MAKESHIFT CAMPS, BUT TELLING THEM THAT THEY WILL HAVE TO RETURN TO CAMBODIA. THE RTG HOPES TO PREVENT ADDITIONAL REFUGEES FROM ENTERING, AND TO AVOID A REPEAT OF ITS LONGSTANDING VIETNAMESE REFUGEE PROBLEM. END SUMMARY.

1. EMBASSY POLITICAL ASSISTANTS VISITED CHANTABURI AND TRAT PROVINCES APRIL 22-23 AND PRACHINBURI PROVINCE APRIL
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24 TO INVESTIGATE THE REFUGEE SITUATION ALONG THE

EASTERN PORTION OF THE THAI/CAMBODIAN BORDER. THEIR FINDINGS INDICATE THAT ABOUT 4000 CAMBODIAN REFUGEES HAVE ENTERED THESE THREE PROVINCES, A MARKED INCREASE FROM LAST WEEK (REFTEL A).

2. OFFICIALS IN PONG NAM RON AND MAKHAM DISTRICTS OF CHANTABURI TOLD AN EMBASSY POLITICAL ASSISTANT THAT 1500 CAMBODIAN REFUGEES ENTERING PONG NAM RON AFTER THE FALL OF PHNOM PENH. ABOUT HALF OF THESE ARE CIVILIANS WHOM LOCAL OFFICIALS HAVE RELOCATED AT A CAMP IN BAN KLONGYAI OF PONG NAM RON DISTRICT. THE OTHER HALF ARE MILITARY PERSONNEL AND THEIR FAMILIES WHOM LOCAL OFFICIALS HAVE MOVED TO A CAMP IN MAKHAM DISTRICT. THE SECOND GROUP SEEMS TO BE WELL OFF, HAVING BROUGHT WITH THEM CLOSE TO 100 PERSONAL VEHICLES, A LARGE SUPPLY OF RICE AND SOME HEAVY CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT. A LOCAL OFFICIAL SAID HE EXPECTS NO MORE REFUGEES TO ENTER PONG NAM RON BECAUSE THE KHMER COMMUNISTS NOW COMPLETELY CONTROL THE BORDER IN THIS AREA. HE ALSO SAID THAT THE RTG WILL NOT GRANT REFUGEE STATUS TO CAMBODIANS WHO ENTERED AFTER APRIL 17, WHEN THE RTG DECLARED THE BORDER CLOSED.

3. GOVERNOR PRUTHIPHONG CHAIYASOTHI OF TRAT PROVINCE SAID THAT THERE ARE 1761 REFUGEES IN TRAT INCLUDING 298 CAMBODIAN MUSLIMS WHO ENTERED LAEM NGOP DISTRICT BEFORE THE FALL OF PHNOM PENH. THE DISTRICT OFFICER OF KONG YAI IN TRAT SAID THAT 540 CAMBODIAN REFUGEES WERE OFFICIALLY REGISTERED AS OF APRIL 22, AND AN ADDITIONAL 240 WERE UNDERGOING THE INVESTIGATION AND REGISTRATION PROCESS ON APRIL 23. THE DISTRICT OFFICER SAID THAT AN ADDITIONAL 300-400 CAMBODIANS OF THAI ANCESTRY FROM CAMBODIA'S KOH KONG PROVINCE HAD CASUALLY MOVED IN WITH RELATIVES IN KONG YAI. LOCAL OFFICIALS ARE DOING THEIR BEST TO CONTROL AND CARE FOR THE REFUGEES, BUT ARE HANDICAPPED BY A LACK OF FUNDING FROM BANGKOK.

4. GOVERNOR PRUTHIPHONG SAID THAT APPROXIMATELY 2000 "FREE CAMBODIANS" IN KOH KONG ARE HOLDING OUT APPROXIMATELY SEVEN KILOMETERS FROM THE THAI BORDER IN KLONG YAI. HE FEARS THAT IF THE KHMER COMMUNISTS ATTACK THIS GROUP, THEY WILL SPILL OVER INTO THAILAND.

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5. THE SECRETARY TO THE GOVERNOR OF PRACHINBURI PROVINCE TOLD AN EMBASSY POLITICAL ASSISTANT THAT 500-600 CAMBODIAN REFUGEES HAD ENTERED THE PROVINCE AS OF APRIL 23. AN ADDITIONAL 400 ENTERED ARANYA PRATHET DISTRICT APRIL 24. THE NEW ARRIVALS SAID THAT KHMER COMMUNIST TROOPS HAD FIRED AT THEIR GROUP WHILE ATTEMPTING TO CROSS THE BORDER AND HAD KILLED ABOUT 40 OF THEM. BORDER PATROL

POLICE IN ARANYA PRATHET SAID THAT THE KHMER COMMUNISTS HAD KILLED ABOUT 30 OTHER PERSONS, INCLUDING SIX MONKS, IN POIPET WHEN THEY RESISTED KC ORDERS TO MOVE TO SISOPHON. THE KC USED THROAT-SLITTING AS AN EXTERMINATION TECHNIQUE.

6. A USOM OFFICIAL WHO TOURED NORTHEAST THAILAND'S SOUTHERN BORDER WITH CAMBODIA ENCOUNTERED SOME 700 KHMER REFUGEES IN SURIN PROVINCE. SOME 40 OF THEM, PLUS ANOTHER 35 DEPENDENTS, CLAIMED TO HAVE WORKED FOR THE AMERICAN MISSION IN CAMBODIA.

7. THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS ESTIMATES THAT ALTOGETHER ABOUT 6000 CAMBODIAN REFUGEES ARE IN THAILAND, INCLUDING ABOUT 1100 WHOM THE U.S. BROUGHT OUT. AN MFA OFFICIAL ALSO MENTIONED THAT ABOUT 70 VIETNAMESE HAVE ARRIVED BY BOAT OR PLANE AND ASKED TO STAY.

8. AN AMERICAN MISSIONARY WHO VISITED THE REFUGEE CAMPS IN CHANTHABURI SAID THAT OFFICIALS AT THE CAMPS ARE TELLING REFUGEES THAT THEY WILL HAVE TO GO BACK TO CAMBODIA. A MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OFFICIAL TOLD US THAT THE RTG IS TELLING THE REFUGEES THIS TO SCARE AS MANY OF THEM AS POSSIBLE BACK ACROSS THE BORDER, ALTHOUGH THE RTG HAS NO IMMEDIATE PLAN TO REPATRIATE THEM. LOCAL OFFICIALS IN CHANTHABURI AND TRAT TOLD AN EMBASSY POLITICAL ASSISTANT THAT THEY ARE UNDER ORDERS FROM BANGKOK TO PREVENT ADDITIONAL REFUGEES FROM ENTERING THAILAND, AND THAT IT IS RTG POLICY TO RETURN THOSE ALREADY HERE.

9. COMMENT: THE RTG IS DEEPLY CONCERNED THAT THE CAMBODIAN REFUGEES WILL CONSTITUTE A REPEAT OF THE
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LONGSTANDING VIETNAMESE REFUGEE PROBLEM IN THAILAND. ALTHOUGH THE RTG HOPES TO EVENTUALLY REPATRIATE THE NEW REFUGEES TO CAMBODIA, IT IS CONCENTRATING FOR THE MOMENT ON LIMITING THE SIZE OF THE PROBLEM.

MASTERS

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